



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

821 KENNETH HAHN HALL OF ADMINISTRATION
500 WEST TEMPLE STREET / LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90012
PHONE (213) 974-3333 / FAX (213) 625-7360
zev@bos.lacounty.gov / <http://zev.co.la.ca.us>

ZEV YAROSLAVSKY

CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD
SUPERVISOR, THIRD DISTRICT

Testimony of Chairman Zev Yaroslavsky

Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors

Regarding

Reauthorization of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

Before the

U.S. House of Representatives

Committee on Financial Services

Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity

October 16, 2007

Chairwoman Waters, Ranking Member Capito, members of the Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity:

My name is Zev Yaroslavsky, and I am the Chairman of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. Thank you for holding these important hearings and for the opportunity to testify before you today.

Congresswoman Waters, thank you for the invitation to testify, and for your strong commitment to supportive housing as a definitive solution to address homelessness in Los Angeles County.

The County of Los Angeles

Los Angeles County has 88 incorporated cities and covers over 4,084 square miles. The County's population is 10 million. Approximately, 8.5 million residents live within the incorporated cities, and 1.5 million residents live in unincorporated areas. It is the largest urban county in the country. All cities in the County bear responsibility for land use planning, housing policy and development, and essential municipal services.

Overseen by a five member Board of Supervisors, the County of Los Angeles is responsible for the County's public health, health care, mental health care, social services, children and family services, adult and juvenile probation services, child support collection services, community and senior services, Countywide correctional system, law enforcement for 40 cities and the unincorporated area, justice services through the District Attorney, Public Defender and Alternate Public Defender. The County operates income support programs, serving approximately 60,000 people on general relief each month, and over 365,000 people on CalWORKs (TANF). The County's Health Services provide over 2.5 million outpatient visits per year, nearly 300,000 emergency room visits and over 275,000 public health clinic visits.

In addition to the general programs that are commonly used by homeless persons, the County departments administer numerous programs targeting homeless individuals, including housing services for families on CalWORKs, mental health care programs for chronically homeless persons, and substance abuse treatment. The County's foster care program operates facilities aimed at preventing homelessness among its emancipated foster youth population. Coordinated planning for homeless programs is facilitated by the County Chief Executive Office, Service Integration Branch.

In 2006, the County budgeted an estimated \$208 million for programs and services directly serving the homeless population. This includes the Homeless Prevention Initiative approved by the Board of Supervisors on April 4, 2006 which incorporated \$16 million in new on-going County General Fund for homeless programs and \$80 million in one-time General Fund Housing and Homeless Program Fund.

Homelessness in Los Angeles County

On any given night, the overall homeless population of Los Angeles County is approximately 73,000. There are three overarching factors contributing to homelessness in Los Angeles County:

1. Pervasive lack of permanent, affordable housing;
2. Insufficient resources and funding to help clients achieve and sustain self-sufficiency; and
3. Severe psycho-emotional impairment of clients related to, and exacerbated by, substance abuse and/or mental illness.

In recognition of this serious issue, the County's investment of \$100 million in the new Homeless Prevention Initiative is intended to strengthen homeless and housing services. The goal of the initiative is to enhance the regional system of care, connect all of the County's homeless programs, establish comprehensive services to prevent homelessness, and move homeless individuals and families to safe, permanent, affordable housing.

Permanent Supportive Housing is a Key Solution

In Los Angeles County, approximately 22,000 persons are chronically homeless. Unfortunately, chronic homelessness is a complex, persistent and long term problem. Perhaps the greatest barrier in addressing chronic homelessness is the lack of permanent supportive housing to address multiple issues of the chronically homeless.

Studies show that supportive housing programs which link permanent affordable housing with supportive services to chronically homeless persons in need of public assistance and/or services (such as case management, substance abuse, mental health, and disabled and frail elderly homeless services) effectively reduce homelessness.

This housing model improves housing stability and reduces the use of high cost public services. Additionally, placement of homeless persons with severe mental illness in permanent supportive housing is associated with reductions in hospitalizations, incarcerations, and subsequent use of shelters, emergency rooms, psychiatric and detoxification programs.

In Los Angeles County, there is a growing interest in and commitment to the establishment of permanent supportive housing as a key strategy to reduce regional homelessness. The linkage of housing and supportive services requires partnerships which facilitate collaboration and coordination between housing development efforts in the 88 cities, supportive services of the County, and resources of other governmental agencies and private entities. The complexities of pulling together housing developers, capital funders, and organizations that can supply and finance the provision of permanent housing with supportive services, will require extensive coordination and integration among the entities involved.

On July 24, 2007, I and Supervisor Yvonne Braithwaite Burke introduced a comprehensive permanent supportive housing motion which was unanimously adopted by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors to advance partnerships with cities and entities interested in developing permanent supportive housing to reduce chronic homelessness throughout the region.

One of the mandates of this motion is to promote "State and federal legislative and regulatory policy change that enable the creation of adequate funding streams for permanent supportive housing to include, but not limited to, pre-development and operational expenses, and additional resources for County supportive services for homeless individuals and families and those at risk for becoming homeless."

For these reasons, Los Angeles County strongly supports the inclusion of resources to advance the development of permanent supportive housing which incorporate funding for ongoing supportive services for chronically homeless persons including those who are elderly, disabled and mentally ill in the reauthorization of McKinney-Vento.

Los Angeles County supports the reauthorization of McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

The County's Federal Legislative Agenda includes policy to support the reauthorization of McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act programs and proposals which would increase local discretion over the use of homeless assistance funds, increase funding for homeless assistance programs, including supportive housing, supportive services, and emergency services. In general, the County supports provisions which would reauthorize McKinney-Vento and increase funding for County homeless services, and opposes provisions which would decrease administrative funding.

The County strongly supports provisions which would:

- Expand the use of grants to fund homeless assistance and homeless prevention services;
- Increase resources to advance the development of permanent supportive housing including ongoing funding for supportive services; and
- Appropriate \$2.5 billion for homeless assistance grants in Federal Fiscal Year 2008.

I thank you again for holding these important hearings and for allowing me to testify today with regards to homelessness in Los Angeles County.

Chairman Zev Yaroslavsky
Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors

Zev Yaroslavsky (born December 21, 1948 in Los Angeles, California) is a member of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, representing the western part of Los Angeles County and a constituency of two million people. He was elected to the board in 1994 and has been re-elected three times, most recently in 2006. He previously served on the Los Angeles City Council (1975-94) to which he was elected and re-elected six times. He earned an M.A. in British Imperial History and a B.A. in Economics and History, both from U.C.L.A. He is a graduate of Fairfax High School in Los Angeles.

As a member of the County Board of Supervisors, Yaroslavsky quickly emerged as a leader on fiscal, health care, transportation, cultural and environmental matters. He authored the 1996 Proposition 'A' park bond which resulted in the preservation of rural open space and the development of urban parks throughout the County. He authored the 2002 Proposition 'B' trauma tax, approved by over 73% of County voters, a measure which is largely credited with stabilizing the County's perpetually unpredictable health care finances.

He was the driving force behind the Orange Line bus way across the San Fernando Valley which opened in 2005 to record ridership (22,000 daily boardings). He led the effort to rebuild and modernize the world famous Hollywood Bowl amphitheater which re-opened in 2004, and he was instrumental in the development of Walt Disney Concert Hall, the home of the L.A. Philharmonic Orchestra, which opened in 2003. He has also helped fund major investments in the L.A. County Museum of Art and the County's Museum of Natural History. He is regarded as the County's fiscal watchdog, insisting that it live within its means.

As a Los Angeles City Councilman, Yaroslavsky honed his fiscal skills as the respected Chair of the Council's Finance Committee, but he also earned a reputation as a politician who was willing to take on issues that others would not, including the highly controversial excessive use of force and intelligence gathering policies of the Los Angeles Police Department. As Councilman, he also co-authored two landmark initiatives with his colleague, the late Councilman Marvin Braude: Proposition U (1986) which cut by half the commercial development rights adjacent to residential neighborhoods, and Proposition O (1988) which repealed a drilling permit previously issued to the Occidental Petroleum Company.

Since 1991, Yaroslavsky has also been associated with the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), a non-governmental organization headquartered in Washington, D.C., that promotes the development of democratic institutions in burgeoning democracies. He has monitored three elections for NDI: Romania (1990), Mexico (2000), and Ukraine (2004). He has conducted seminars on democratic institution-building in Russia, Ukraine, Turkey and Bosnia/Herzegovina.